

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 292748

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OGEN, LE

SUBJECT:VOA CORRESPONDENT ROBERTS VISIT TO LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 8624

1. WHILE WE CONTINUE TO HAVE SOME RESERVATIONS RE TRAVEL IN LEBANON BY VOA CORRESPONDENT, WE ARE ALSO AWARE OF NEED, WITH YOUR CONCURRENCE, TO PERMIT VOA TO DISCHARGE ITS NEWS COLLECTION FUNCTION AS FREELY AS IS CONSISTENT WITH PRUDENCE AND SECURITY.

2. WHEN USIA/WASHINGTON CONTACTED US FOR CLEARANCE ON CABLE REQUESTING EMBASSY APPROVAL FOR CURRENT ROBERTS VISIT, WE POSED NO OBJECTION BUT MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS WHICH WERE ACCEPTED:

A) THERE MUST BE NO RPT NO RECURRENCE OF SITUATION WHICH OCCURRED DURING LAST VISIT TO COVER SARKIS INAUGURATION WHEN ROBERTS TURNED UP IN COMBAT ZONES IN METN AFTER RPT
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AFTER HE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE DEPARTED LEBANON;

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B) IN VIEW OF CONTINUING DELICACY OF SECURITY SITUATION,
PARTICULARLY IN SOUTH LEBANON, ROBERTS SHOULD MAINTAIN CLOSE
CONTACT WITH EMBASSY RE HIS TRAVEL PLANS AND, IN NO EVENT,
ENTER SOUTH LEBANON (I.E., PROCEED SOUTH OF SIDON);

C) ONE OF THE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED US IN APPROVING
VOA REQUEST FOR ROBERTS TO COVER SARKIS INAUGURATION WAS
HIS PLAN TO TRAVEL, INsofar AS POSSIBLE, IN COMPANY OF
AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS. E ASKED THAT
HE FOLLOW THIS ,RACTICE DURING CURRENT VISIT TO MAXIMUM
EXTENT;

D) IN VIEW OF OUR POLICY OF SUPPORING RECONSTITUTION OF
CENTRAL LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, REPORTS OF EFFORTS TO PUT
RUDIMENTARY MINYINFO BACK TOGETHER, AND DESIRE TO HEAD OFF
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH LEBANESE AUTHORITIES, WE SUGGESTED
THAT ROBERTS, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH EMBASSY, SEEK
CONTACT MINYINFO TO ESTABLISH HIS PERSONAL BONA FIDES AND
THOSE OF VOA IN LIGHT OF PROBABILITY THAT SUCH VISITS WILL
OCCUR MORE FREQUENTLY IN FUTURE.

3. USIA UNDERTOOK TO CONVEY THESE POINTS AND CONCERNS TO
ROBERTS BY THEIR OWN CHANNELS PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR
BEIRUT.

4. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR REACTIONS AND/OR COMMENTS OH
PRESENT VISIT OR MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF VOA ACTIVITIES
IN PRESENT-DAY LEBANON. ROBINSON

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